

Introductory Remarks
Dr. Michele Haranin
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I'm Michele Haranin, and I am chair of the AOA's Federal Government Relations Committee. I'm pleased to join my colleagues in welcoming you to today's White House Conference on Aging Solutions Forum.

Optometrists and the AOA have been active participants in all four of the previous White House Conferences on Aging, and we are pleased to be involved again this year.

Optometrists have a special relationship with their older patients for a variety of reasons. Of course, as people age they tend to need the care that optometrists provide. However, there is another special link that I would like to touch upon – and that's geography.

A high percentage of older Americans live in small towns and rural areas, and in some regions, an optometrist may be the only health care professional that senior citizens see on a regular basis. Optometrists are keenly aware of the unique role they play in rural America and make every effort to ensure that their patients seek and receive necessary care, but they are particularly mindful of their older patients.

Impaired vision can shrink a person's universe like nothing else, and optometrists are striving to eliminate those barriers for our nation's aging population.

Today's forum is a valuable step in the development of national policy recommendations to help foster better lives for our seniors. The AOA is proud to be a part of it.

Again, thank you for being with us today.